

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 12-15 and 23-28 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Alack (4,848,975). In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

The present invention is directed to a discharge device for use in a vessel for storing particulate matter such as pulverized coal or fly ash. The discharge device comprises a converging outer shell and a permeable, converging inner shell positioned within the outer shell. The inner shell is secured at or near its upper rim to an inner wall of the outer shell forming a connection between the inner shell and the outer shell. This connection is contained within the outer shell and is sealed by means of a gasket. As set forth on pages 2 and 3 of the specification, this configuration reduces or avoids additional leakage passageways and/or makes positioning of the inner shell less critical at least with regard to the tightening of the flanges connecting the discharge device to a vessel. Additionally, as set forth on page 6 of the specification, this configuration facilitates horizontal removal of the discharge device from the vessel for maintenance or other reasons.

The Alack reference is directed to a hopper system and clamping arrangement for a permeable membrane for use with finely ground materials such as flour. The hopper of Alack is not designed to be attached to a vessel by flanges positioned on the vessel and on the hopper as is the present invention. Thus, there is not the necessity for preventing the multiple leakage passageways that exists with the present invention.

Use of an arrangement such as is disclosed in Alack with the discharge device of the present invention would provide a member that would extend between flanges on the discharge device and the vessel and would thus double the passageways for potential leakage between the discharge device and the vessel. One of the benefits of the present invention is that the permeable membrane is contained completely within the outer wall of the discharge device and does not extend over the flange which connects the discharge device to the vessel.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that the present invention is neither disclosed nor suggested by the Alack reference. Additionally, the present invention provides certain advantages over the prior art which would not be obtained by the Alack reference.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and favorable consideration by the Examiner is requested. Should the Examiner find any impediment to the allowance of the claims which could be corrected by telephone interview with the undersigned, the Examiner is requested to initiate such an interview.

Respectfully submitted,

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